



State Representative  
**Shay Schual-Berke**  
33rd District  
2006 Legislative Report



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

This legislative session was one of the most productive ever, in which we achieved meaningful improvements in education, health care, and our environment, improvements that will be noticed in our lives here at home. I was able to find solutions for some local problems as well. For the first time in years, money was there to help our seniors, students, businesses and workers alike.

Though we were able to fund many good things, this year's budget prudently reserves two-thirds of the budget surplus--\$941 million--for future needs, for future years.

It is truly a privilege and an honor to represent you in Olympia; many of the issues I championed on your behalf have been signed into law by the Governor! Representing you means being accountable to you, so this final report on the 2006 legislative session includes highlights of how I voted on important issues for our district. You can see my entire voting record on the web at <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/schual-berke/>.

It is absolutely wonderful to return home after session. Once again I have a district office close and convenient for all of you (see contact box). I work for you 12 months a year, so please don't ever hesitate to call, visit or email if I can assist you, or if you have any questions about votes or actions. I'd also love to hear your ideas for new state laws and policies.

Warmly,

Rep. Shay Schual-Berke, M.D. • 33rd Legislative District

**Fair Elections for Courts and Ports**

The era of unlimited special-interest campaign contributions to candidates for Washington court and major port or county positions is over. My plan for applying the Fair Campaign Practices Act to these offices is now the law.

When the people voted 3-to-1 for the campaign contribution limits in the Fair Campaign Practices Act, major port, county and judicial positions weren't included. But when special interests started pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into these races, I knew we needed a law that said: Washington elections cannot be bought!

My session survey showed an amazing 96% of local citizens wanted this reform. It will make candidates for court and major port positions subject to the same contribution limit that applies to statewide races. The limit for county offices will be the same as for legislative races.

Court decisions affect our lives and freedoms; judges must be as free as possible to be impartial. County and port decisions (like on the third runway) directly impact our homes and families. Ensuring that decision-makers will always be accountable to the people, and never simply to big-money special interests, is a victory for clean elections and our democracy.



**Protecting the Public's Health**

**Protecting against a Panflu Pandemic**



Bird flu is sweeping through Europe, Asia and Africa. If we're not prepared, pandemic flu could cause catastrophic loss of life here. A former director of public health for Seattle and King County is warning: "pandemic flu is the most serious, global, large-scale threat facing us."

As the only medical doctor in the Legislature, I led efforts to help state and local health departments be ready with comprehensive plans to protect the public against pandemic flu. We also improved funding to help scientists monitor, rapidly test and detect pandemic flu activity. The roughly \$2 million cost of these efforts amounts to about 32¢ for each state resident. The cost of not being prepared would be measured in lives instead of pennies. I will seek additional funding next year.

**More Effective Disaster Response**

One of my goals as Chair of the Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing is to find the most cost-effective means of meeting public health needs. After the 9-11 Commission report identified that retired health care professionals are a great untapped resource to respond to major disasters, I proposed HB 1850. We know that in the event of a major catastrophe, we will not have sufficient trained medical professionals.

Recently signed into law, my proposal creates a retired volunteer medical worker license and "Good Samaritan" immunity from lawsuits for those who serve in a crisis. Everyone - from doctors to lawyers to our military department - helped make this new law a model to bring retired medical professionals back into action when their expertise can save lives in a major disaster. I will propose expanding this next year to include more professionals.



FEMA Photo

**E-mail:** [schual-berke.shay@leg.wa.gov](mailto:schual-berke.shay@leg.wa.gov)  
**Olympia Office:** 331 John L. O'Brien Bldg.,  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600  
(360) 786-7834  
**District Office:** 22525 Marine View Dr S, Suite 204,  
Des Moines, WA 98198  
(206) 824-5097  
**Legislative Hotline:** 1-800-562-6000  
**Web Site:** <http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/schual-berke/>



# 2006 Legislative Report

## A Great Year for our Environment

Washington’s environmental community called 2006 a “stellar year” for our environment. I agree, and was proud to support new laws that will take better care of our environment and Puget Sound, including:

- A state strategy and \$56 million to clean up toxics and septic systems that are fouling Puget Sound and destroying habitat, swimming and fishing areas (HB 1458, YES)
- The nation’s strongest requirements on manufacturer responsibility for recycling electronic waste that contain mercury and other toxins (HB 6428, YES)
- Firm oil-spill prevention requirements on Puget Sound oil tankers (SB 6244, YES).
- Promoting Energy Freedom for Washington by creating renewable fuel standards and funding low-interest grants and loans to help farmers produce renewable energy sources in Washington. (SB 6508, HB 2939. YES on both)



## Supporting Our Local Schools

Business said loudly and clearly that investing in education is the best investment we can make to prepare students for the workplace and help the Washington economy. We responded by securing significant new money for our local school districts, tied to truly improved student education (see chart). For 2005-06 as a whole, statewide funding for schools grew by an average of \$1,490 per student!



School District	2006 Gains
Highline . . . . .	1,779,000
Kent. . . . .	2,449,000
Federal Way. . . . .	2,165,000

The new funding includes targeted investments to help schools offer summer school, Saturday classes, personal tutoring—or whatever the local schools think best—to reach out to students who are struggling with the WASL. Importantly, we also authorized alternative paths to graduation for students who meet high standards but who don’t perform at their best on high-stakes tests. I promised local citizens I would work on this issue; I will follow these changes carefully

## Helping Highline Community College

Highline Community College is a vital part of our community and future. When the college encountered dangerous—potentially life-threatening—high voltage system failures, they asked me to help. I was able to persuade lawmakers to quickly provide all \$1.7 million the college needed to fix the problem and end the danger.



## How I Voted on Key State Issues in 2006

### Responsible Budget & Tax Policy

This newsletter highlights many of the smart investments we made this year in education, health care, public safety and the environment. But good budget policy also means saving for future needs and reducing taxes and fees when it is possible and responsible to do so. The 2006 budget I supported reserves nearly \$1 billion for future needs! Here are several proposals I supported to provide targeted tax and fee relief, now law.



### Ending park fees

I supported ending the \$5 state park fee. The people own the parks, and shouldn’t have to pay the \$5 fee to enjoy them. (HB 2416. YES)

### Fair Tax-deferrals for Senior Citizens

In 2004, lawmakers passed an idea I championed to greatly expand senior citizen property-tax relief. This year, we dramatically reduced interest rates (from 8% to 5%) in the senior citizen property-tax deferral program to make it more fair to seniors. (HB 2569. YES)



### Ending the Nursing Home Bed Tax

We also repealed the nursing-home bed tax, which added up to over \$1,900 a year per bed and hurt many private-paying nursing home residents. Ending this tax is the right thing to do for our elderly and people with disabilities. YES! (HB 2925)

### Performance Audits of Tax Preferences

Lawmakers passed the bill I co-sponsored to require performance audits of the billions of dollars of special tax preferences in Washington. This will tell us which tax preferences are really serving public interests and which are merely special-interest tax loopholes that make everyone else pay more than their fair share of taxes. (HB 1069. YES)

### Tax Relief for Small Businesses = Jobs

We repealed the automatic 5 percent penalty for late payment of businesses taxes and changed tax due dates to the 25th day of the month rather than the 20th. This \$11 million tax reform was a key priority for Washington’s small businesses. (HB 2671. YES).



## Caring about Health Care

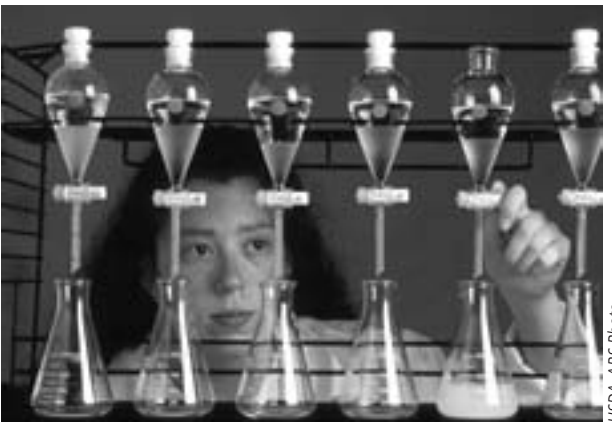
### Helping Small Businesses and their Workers

I voted YES for the new Small Business Health Insurance Partnership. It will offer state premium assistance to help more small businesses provide health coverage to employees.

Businesses like this partnership because it is not a mandate, but a new choice that makes health coverage more affordable for businesses and their workers. (HB 2572)

### Health Insurance for Kids

We ensured more low-income children can get health coverage through Medicaid (HB 2376) and funded coverage for 7,000 more kids. I voted YES. This is a smart investment. A year of children’s health insurance costs \$1,284. Even a single hospitalization for a health problem that wasn’t detected or treated in time costs over \$3,000.



### Evidence-based health technology decisions

The 2004 evidence-based prescription-drug reforms I championed will save taxpayers about \$42 million this year! I recently voted YES for the next step: evidence-based health technology choices in state spending. This new law could save tens of millions of tax dollars. (HB 2575)

### Respecting Final Wishes

To ensure living wills and patient privacy are respected, I voted YES to create a secure statewide registry of personal directives regarding end of life care. This will enable doctors and emergency personnel anywhere in Washington to find these directives when they’re needed. (HB 2342)

### Medicare Prescription Drug Help

I’m very unhappy with the confusing and badly run federal Medicare prescription drug benefit. One problem is that it required new co-pays from roughly 100,000 of our state’s most vulnerable residents. I worked with the Governor and we provided \$18 million to prevent these co-pays from discouraging seniors from obtaining needed medicines. (Budget)



## Other 2006 Actions

### Fulfilling our Responsibility to Foster Children

I want to thank Harborview Medical Center and the Children’s Home Society for helping me persuade the Legislature to create a unit in DSHS dedicated to improving health care for foster children, including dental and mental health care. Foster kids need stability in their lives, and my bill (HB 2985) will help ensure stability, continuity and quality in their health care. YES!

### Honoring our Veterans

Lawmakers created a \$2 million Veterans Innovations Program and a Defenders Fund to help veterans returning from foreign wars make successful transitions home. This is the least we can do for those who have risked so much, and sacrificed much, for us. (HB 2754. YES)

